1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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The fine dot stipple indicates the aj

[facing p. v (a)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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MAP I. THE CULTURAL AREA

the approximate area occupied by the Nyakyusa-Ngonde people and groups

[facing p. v (b)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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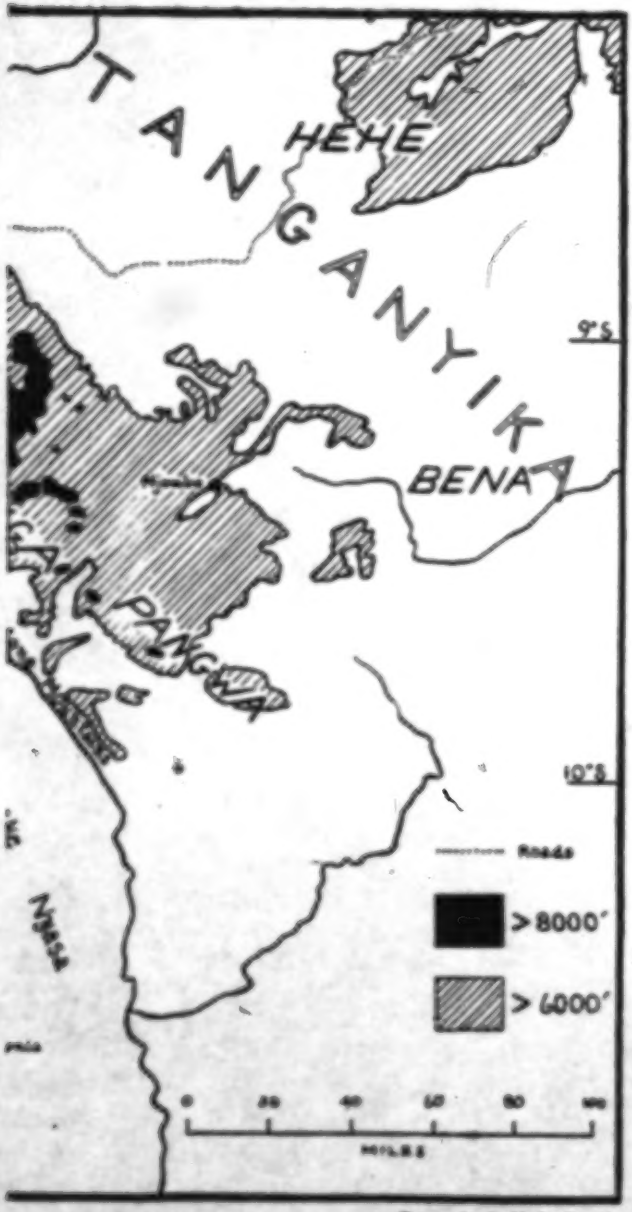

Drawn by J. V. L. Rennie

dominated by them.

[FACING p. v (c)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

a. *The cultural area*

THE Nyakyusa and Ngonde[1] are a Bantu-speaking people who live at the north-west corner of Lake Nyasa, on the marshy plain at the head of the Lake, and in the hills that rise steeply to the north and west of it. They straddle the Songwe river which divides Tanganyika from Nyasaland. The area is enclosed by the Lake itself, the escarpment of the Livingstone mountains on the north-east and the Poroto mountains on the north-west. To the west the boundaries are less clearly defined, but coincide pretty closely with the boundary of Rungwe district and with the watershed which separates Nyasaland from Northern Rhodesia. To the south the boundary is that of Chief Mwafulira's country, which lies some twenty miles south of Karonga (see Map I). Most of the area is thus situated between 9° and 10° S., and 33° and 34° E. It covers approximately 4,500 square miles and the population is about 235,000.[2]

Within this area there are local differences in language and custom. The dominant groups are the *Nyakyusa*, who live in Tanganyika on the Lake-shore plain and up into the hills as far as Rungwe mission, and the people of *Ngonde* who live on the Lake-shore plain in Nyasaland. These two groups speak dialects which, though differing somewhat in vocabulary and pronunciation, are easily understood by speakers from both, and their social structure is essentially similar. The main difference is that in Ngonde a

[1] The old men say *Nkhonde*, and the name appears in most of the literature as *Konde*.

[2] The area of Tukuyu district is 4,866 square miles, and the area subject to the Kyungu, the paramount chief of Ngonde, is 2,687 square miles. The Tanganyika census of 1931 gives the population of Rungwe district as 193,062: this was believed in the district to be an over-estimate. The population of Ngonde is approximately 40,000. For the southern boundary of the Ngonde people in 1881 see James Stewart, 'Lake Nyassa and the Water Route to the Lake Region of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, New Series*, Vol. III, 1881. He states that nine miles north of Mount Waller is a marsh; south of it are the Tumbuka, north of it the 'Chungu' (i.e. Ngonde).

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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MAP II. NGONDE AND

[facing p. 2(a)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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491

D NYAKYUSA COUNTRY

Drawn by J. V. L. Rennie

[facing p. 2(b)]

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

try, and Lugard speaks of 'enormous herds' in 1888[1] which a rinderpest epidemic decimated in 1892.[2] A few Kukwe keep one or two sheep, but we saw no goats at all in Rungwe district,[3] and neither sheep nor goats figure in ritual: cattle and fowls provide flesh for sacrifice. Every woman keeps fowls, as every man seeks to own cattle.

With curds and meat from their cattle, with fowls, fish, bananas, grain, pulses, roots and curcurbits, as well as bean tops and pumpkin tops, and—less generally—fruit, the Nyakyusa are exceptionally well fed. Since the dry season is so short and two crops of maize and pulses are grown in the year, there are no 'hunger months' such as the Bemba and many other African peoples experience. Shortages and famine occur, but rarely. All the early travellers comment on the quantities of food available in Nyakyusa country.[4]

c. Relations with the outside world

Perhaps the most significant fact in the history of the Nyakyusa is their long isolation, which is mainly the result of their geographical position. Surrounded on three sides by high mountains, and on the fourth by the stormy head waters of the Lake,[5] the district was largely cut off from the outside world. Slave caravans passed to the north, the west, and the south, but never through Nyakyusa country; and though they were repeatedly attacked by the Sangu, who are said to have raided as far as the Nyasa plain,[6] and several times by the Ngoni, the Nyakyusa repulsed both peoples. Certain of the Kukwe chiefs were forced for a period to pay tribute to the Sangu chief, Merere; but according to their own account none did so for long, and some never paid at all. Kerr-Cross comments on the contrast before 1890 between the unfortified villages of the Nyakyusa and Ndali, and those of the Lambya and Nyika, who, living in open country and harried

[1] Lugard, op. cit., p. 131.
[2] H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (1897), p. 430; D. Kerr-Cross, op. cit., p. 119.
[3] Fotheringham, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 25, mentions goats in Ngonde.
[4] See especially, Thomson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 268, 274; Lugard, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 131.
[5] In 1946 a Lake steamer, the *Vipya*, sank in a storm near Karonga with heavy loss of life.
[6] Kerr Cross, op. cit., pp. 119–29.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

by the Arabs and Bemba, built their huts within a stockade.[1] According to Thomson, the Nyakyusa were unaware even of the existence of Lake Tanganyika in 1879 and their more distant eastern neighbours, the Pangwa, Bena, and Hehe had no communication with them.[2]

Unlike the Nyakyusa, the people of Ngonde were trading with the coast long before the arrival of the Europeans, a fact which had a profound effect on their political institutions;[3] but even they did not suffer from the attacks of slavers until *after* Europeans were established in Karonga.

From the point of view of the Nyakyusa-Ngonde people the Europeans came just in time. It was the establishment of British control in Nyasaland which prevented the complete destruction of the people of Ngonde by the slavers, and it is likely that the Nyakyusa also were saved by European intervention, for the raids of Arab slavers and their Sangu allies were becoming serious in Kukwe country in 1889[4] before the German annexation.

The first Europeans known to have sighted Nyakyusa country were a party from the Livingstonia mission (then established at the south of Lake Nyasa) who circumnavigated the Lake in the mission steamer, the *Ilala*, in 1875. They anchored off the north shore but did not land.[5] Two years later, the same steamer sailed by two famous missionaries, Dr. Stewart (of Lovedale) and Dr. Laws (of Livingstonia), landed Frederick Elton, H.B.M. Consul at Mozambique, and a party near the Mbaka mouth.[6] Elton and his party travelled through Selya and Kukwe country to the fort of the Sangu chief, Merere, and thence started for the coast. Elton died on the road, but some of the others got through.[7] In 1879 Joseph Thomson (aged 20), alone with his carriers, travelled through Hehe and Bena country, crossed the Livingstone moun-

[1] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. VI (1890), pp. 286–7; Fotheringham, op. cit., pp. 13–5; 269.

[2] Thomson, op. cit., pp. 248, 276.

[3] Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., *passim*.

[4] Fotheringham, op. cit., pp. 238–41, 288. The Sangu had previously been occupied in a prolonged war with the Hehe. cf. Elton, op. cit., p. 374; Thomson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 229–34.

[5] E. D. Young, 'On a recent Sojourn at Lake Nyassa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. XXI (1877), pp. 230–1.

[6] J. Stewart, 'The Second Circumnavigation of Lake Nyassa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1879, pp. 289–304.

[7] Elton, op. cit., pp. 318–44; Cotterill, op. cit.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the broken country to the north of Lake Nyasa live the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people who, together with those closely related to them in language and culture, number[1] nearly a quarter of a million. They stretch across the river which divides Tanganyika Territory from Nyasaland and, because they were hemmed in by mountains and swift rivers, they long remained isolated from the outside world. They are skilful herdsmen and cultivators, well fed, and practising a system of green manuring and rotation which allows of fixed cultivation, in contrast to the shifting systems of most of their neighbours.

Their villages are large. Each is occupied by a group of age mates together with their wives and young children. Father and son and grandson *must* live in separate villages and full brothers are commonly separated also. Fathers and young sons are in adjoining villages, but the villages of grown men are scattered about a chiefdom without reference to the genealogical connections of its members. The only kinship relationships common within a village are those of half-brothers and of affines, for a man often marries the daughter or sister of a village mate. But although they live dispersed, agnatic kinsmen are bound together by a strong lineage organization. Property, in the form of cattle, circulates within agnatic lineages, passing from brother to full brother in order of seniority, and thence to the son of the senior brother, who inherits, with the cattle, obligations towards his juniors and a certain authority over them. Half-brothers may also be linked by regular exchanges of cattle—'milking one another's cows', as the Nyakyusa call it. Cattle are given at a marriage by the groom to the bride's father, and distributed by him among his brothers and sons; the bulk of them usually going to one of the bride's full brothers, who retains through life a special responsibility for her and her children. Polygyny is approved. The form most favoured

[1] Throughout this book the present tense refers to the period 1934–8 when the material presented here was collected.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

The Spirit-Ridden Konde

CHAPTER I

The Land & the People

UNGONDE, as the Konde people call their country, lies around the north end of Lake Nyasa. Northwards of that point it stretches for about fifty miles, and southwards for roughly the same distance. Like all their neighbours, the Konde belong to the great Bantu race, which occupies Africa from the Cape to the Congo, and beyond.

The lake shore plain is narrow, fertile, and populous, with its centre at Karonga, where there is a British Magistrate, some trading stores, and a station of the Livingstonia Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland. Beyond the plain the tribe, under various local names, reaches up into the mountains on both sides of the lake. Outside of Nyasaland, and northwards across the Songwe, it covers a large area in what was once German East Africa, but is now known as Tanganyika Territory. Here, too, the plain is hot, fertile, and populous as at Karonga. Northwards of the plain lie the healthy uplands of Mwamba and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

131 Bukukwe, culminating, so far as the peopled regions
133 are concerned, in Tukuyu, five thousand feet above sea-level, the residence of the Administrative Officer and his staff, with Post and Telegraph Offices, and a large Government Hospital. Here also are many small trading stores, conducted by Indians and Somali; and a little to the south is the Kyimbila
[797] Station of the Scottish Churches Mission, carrying on the work of the exiled German missionaries. Still further to the south, and less elevated, is the British military post of Masoko.

The population of these fertile and healthy high-
361 lands is dense. From Tukuyu or Kyimbila, looking
101 south and west, numerous villages, each hidden in its banana grove, fill the view westwards to the Bundali Hills, where the Kibira River is marked out by a morning mist, and southwards towards the lake, thirty miles distant. In this region the people call themselves Nyakyusa, with a number of local names indicating no difference of origin or language. The
241 soil is so fertile, and the rain usually so abundant, that in many places two crops are taken annually of some foodstuffs, while of the others the single crop is so great that scarcity, no uncommon occurrence in some parts of Central Africa, is rarely experienced.

133 The Bundali Hills close in this happy valley (for in
101 spite of its elevation the country has the appearance of a valley) on the west; and beyond them, after a most exhausting march, over lofty summits, through deep ravines threaded by bridgeless rivers, one comes to the home of the Bandali, a race of hardy

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Map for "The Spir

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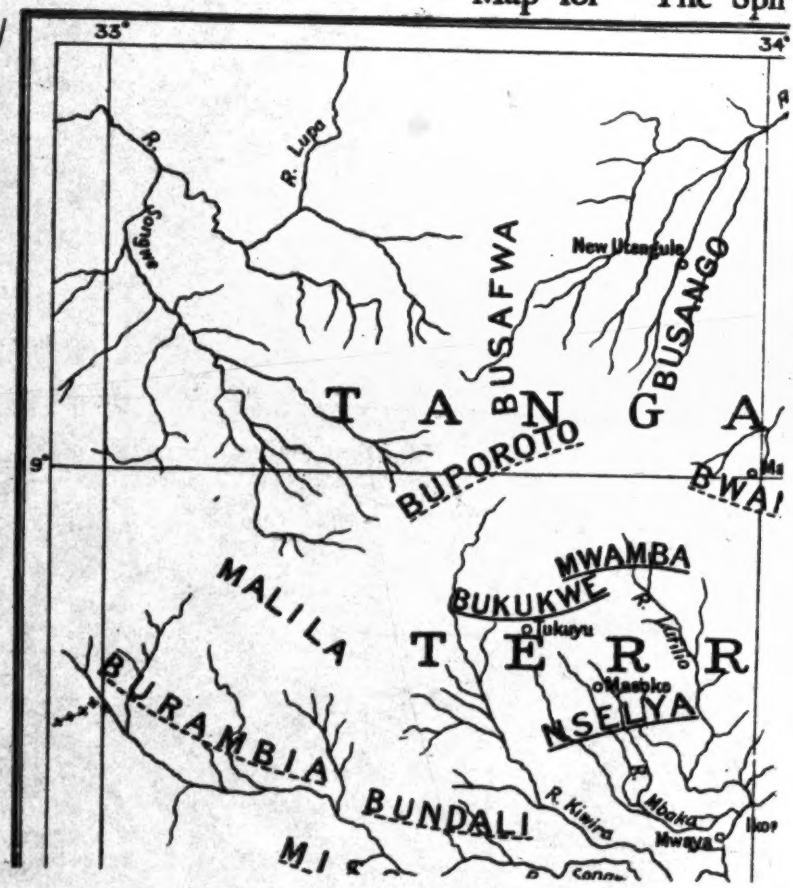

[End Map (A)]

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Spirit Ridden Konde."

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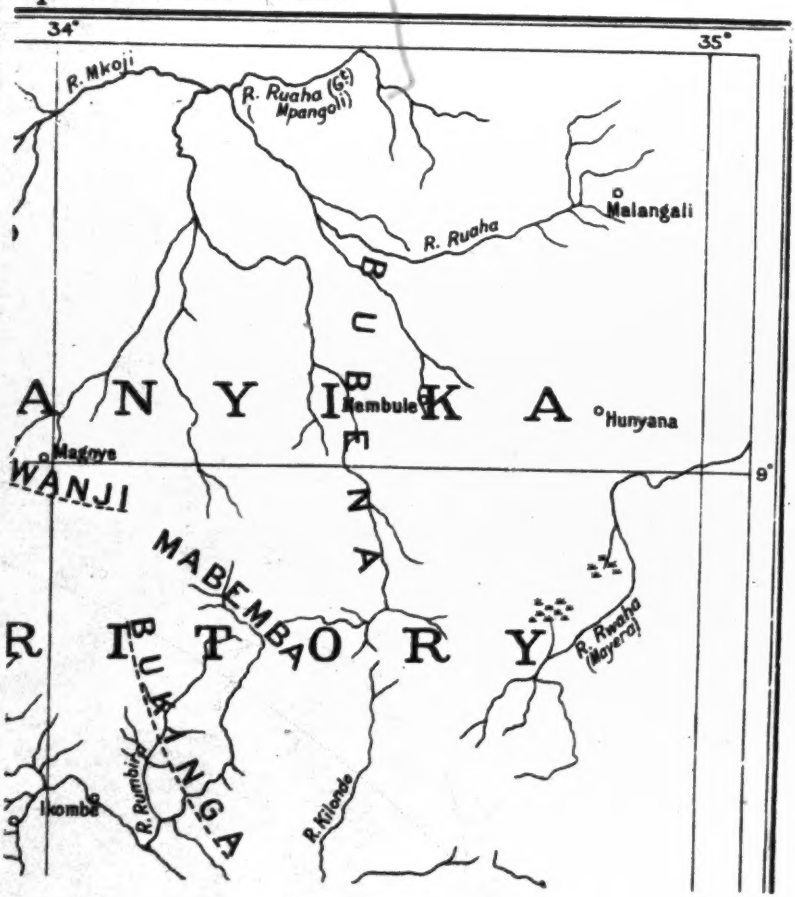
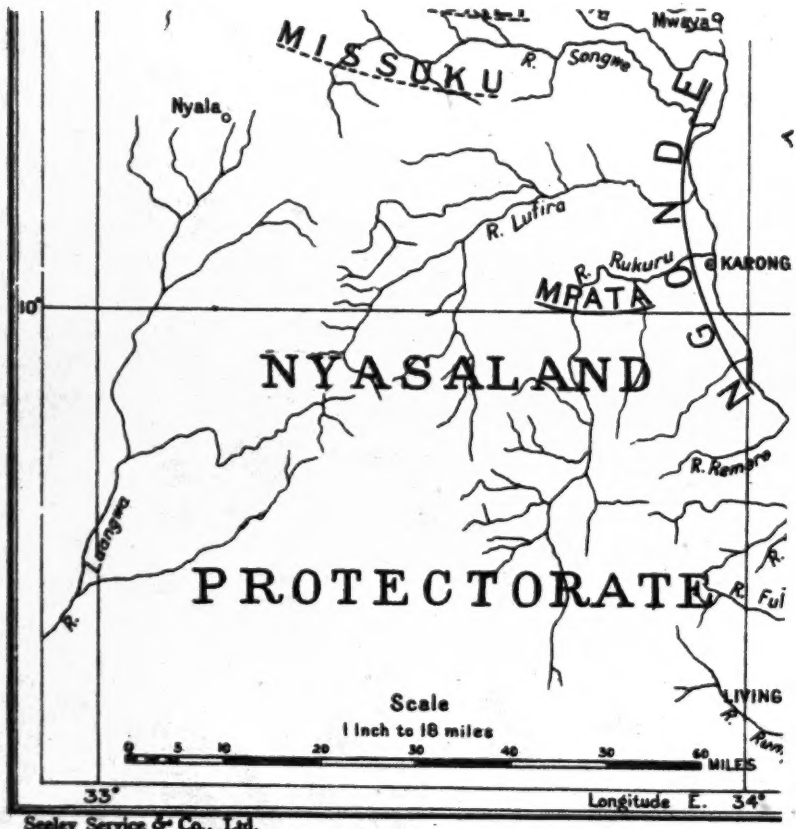


[End Map (B)]

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17



[End Map (C)]

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

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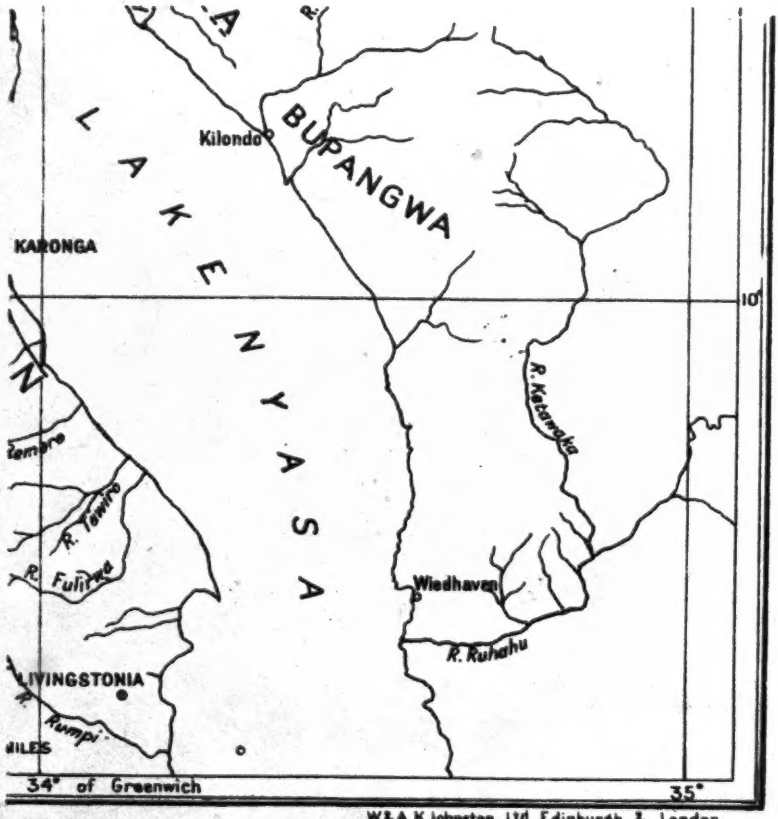

YA Underlined thus indicate Konde speaking districts at Kingonde is displacing the local dialect

[End Map (D)]

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

The *Nyamwanga* and *Iwa* of Abercorn and Masama districts, Northern Rhodesia, are in areas where the density is between 4 and 7 per square mile, and they number less than 20,000.[1]

Tanganyika Peoples[2]

Tribe	District	Total population	Total children	Percentage of children to adults	Percentage of males to females		Increase since 1921
					Adults	Children	
Kukwe	Rungwe	68,197	29,934	74	51	110	..
Seria	Mbeya	10,755	..	..	..	..	..
Nyakyusa	Rungwe	80,092	37,799	..	..	..	..
	Mbeya	2,957	1,030	..	..	..	..
	Other districts	775	551	87	57	102	34,576

Populations of less than 50,000 Persons

Tribe	District	Total population
Kinga	Njombe	27,036
Lambya	Rungwe	12,403
Ndali	Rungwe	22,834
Nyamwanga	Mbeya	10,147
Nyika	Mbeya and Ufipa	25,179
Pangwa	Njombe	20,533
Wanji	Njombe	20,397
Wanda	Mbeya and Ufipa	5,754

LINGUISTIC DATA

According to Doke's classification *Ngonde* is one of the five important languages of the east central sub-zone of Bantu languages, and is spoken in Tanganyika to the north end of Lake Nyasa, where it is known as *Nyakyusa*.[3] In language as well as culture, the Ngonde of Nyasaland are identical with the Nyakyusa of Tanganyika.[4] According to Guthrie's classification, many of the tribes, whose affiliation is not known on cultural or historical grounds, may be attached, on linguistic grounds, to speakers of the Tumbuka group of languages: *Wenya*, *Lambia*, and *Wandia*.[5]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The *Kinga* inhabit the inaccessible heights of the north and west portion of the Livingstone mountains, which rise to 10,000 ft.[6]

Nyakyusa country is bounded on the south by Lake Nyasa and the Songwe river, on the east by the wall of the Livingstone range, and on the west by the Ndali hills. They live between the two walls of the Great Rift valley. In the north the rift is interrupted and closed by the extinct volcano Rungwe (10,000 ft.), from whose base the land drops in hills and little plateaux to the lake-shore plain. The soil is not very rich,

[1] Orde Brown, 1, 1938, maps.
[2] *Census of the Native Population*, 1931, Tables VI and VII.
[3] Doke, 1945, p. 66.
[4] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 8.
[5] Guthrie, 1948, p. 81.
[6] Du Plessis, 1929, p. 323.

4 Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

137 especially in the north, but as between 100 and 130 in. of rain usually falls annually, [132] the country is one of the most fertile parts of Tanganyika. Two crops a year are often grown on the same patch of ground. There is no tsetse, and cattle flourish. Parts of the country are stony and mountainous, others, especially the lake-shore plain, are of deep soil. On the higher ground there are many old volcanic craters filled with rich, moist soil, more fertile than the surrounding land.[1]

131 *Ngonde* country is bounded by Lake Nyasa on the east and by the Misuko hills on the west. It is mountainous except for a belt of low-lying country, about 6–10 miles 132 wide, along the lake shore. The whole district is well watered and well wooded except for some of the higher peaks and the lake plains. Banana-trees are cultivated throughout the district. Game is plentiful. Average annual rainfall at Karonga in 1922–32 was 41·2 in. Average mean temperature was 74° F., seldom rising above 95° F.[2]

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

CULTIVATION

000 The *Kinga* are agriculturists, cultivating wheat, peas, and potatoes, and latterly also oats and barley. They own a moderate amount of cattle, and many sheep and goats. They are skilful smiths.[3] The *Kisi* and *Sandia* around the north-west coast of the lake are fishermen and agriculturists, growing some millet and maize.[4] The *Nyika* are agriculturists and cattle-rearers; the *Lambia* do not rear much cattle; the *Ndali* have large herds, and cultivate bananas in the valleys.[5] The *Nyamwanga* keep sheep and goats and grow maize, beans, and millet.[6]

The *Matengo* have a system of hill-side cultivation of their own, which prevents erosion. When forced into concentrations in the caves in Litembo and Langiro to escape the Ngoni raids, they developed the pit-system of hoeing: the grass is cut and laid in 2-ft. wide lines in a grid of 6-ft. squares. The hole in the middle of the square is hoed by a woman, who throws up the earth on to the grass squares. The crops are planted in the raised beds and weeds are thrown into the pit to rot, forming compost for the following year. After one season the pit becomes the raised bed and the beds the pit, and the system is repeated in following years. With proper succession of crops the gardens may be kept in use for ten years before fertility begins to fail. Maize, millet, and wheat flourish; root crops do not thrive under this system, nor does tobacco. The pit-system is now found mainly at Litembo, and is being abandoned elsewhere.[7]

241 The *Ngonde* and *Nyakyusa* are primarily cattle-rearers and banana-cultivators. They have a very similar culture, but only the latter has been described in detail. Consequently, the following summary refers to the Nyakyusa, unless the contrary is indicated.

The Nyakyusa practise subsistence agriculture by intensive cultivation with rotation of crops. As wide shifting cultivation is not practised, villages are relatively stable. They grow a great quantity of crops—maize, millet, sweet potatoes, beans, ground-nuts, cow-peas, cassava, and rice in the plain. Grass is hoed in for manure. The *Sukuma*, in the Misuko hill area (Ngonde country), grow field-peas and wheat on a small scale.[8]

[1] Wilson, 3, 1938, pp. 5–6.
[2] Murray, 1932, pp. 201–3; Dixey, 1928.
[3] *Handbook of German East Africa*, p. 64.
[4] Ibid., pp. 62–3.
[5] Ibid., pp. 66–7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Pike, 1938.
[8] Murray, 1932, p. 207.

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

Position chart for end paper map.

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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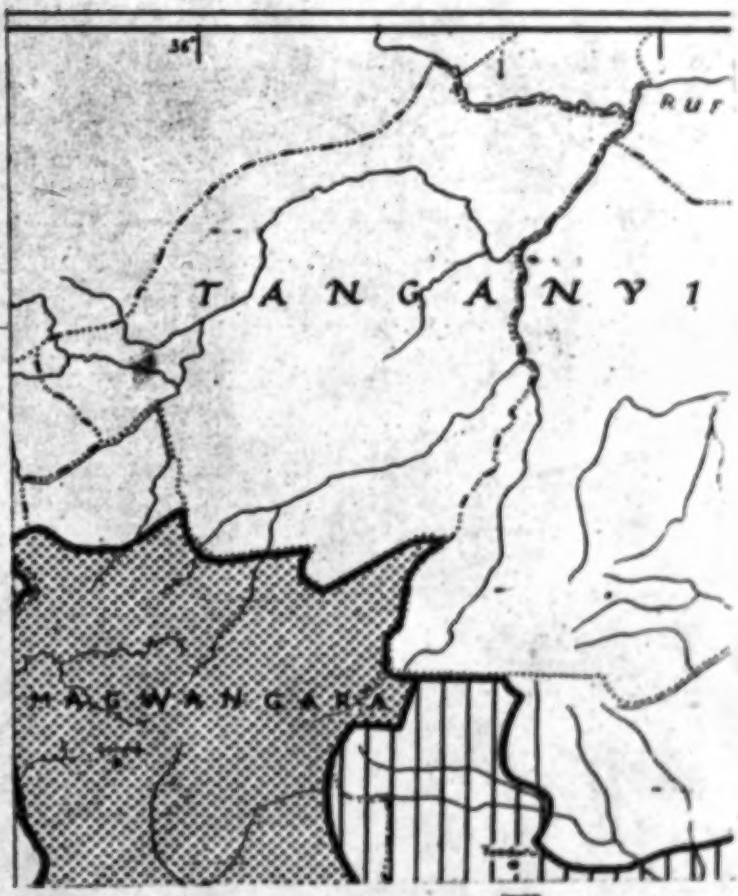
[End paper map A]

●131

[End paper map B]

●131



[End paper map C]

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[End paper map D]

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[End paper map E]

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[End paper map F]

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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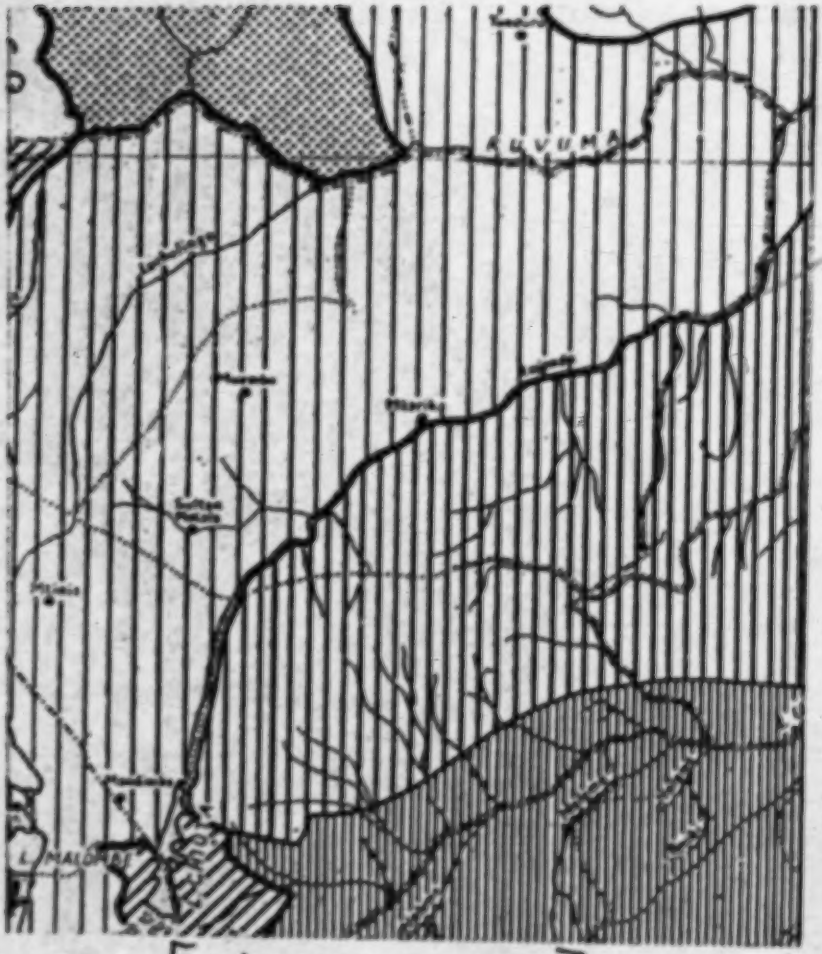

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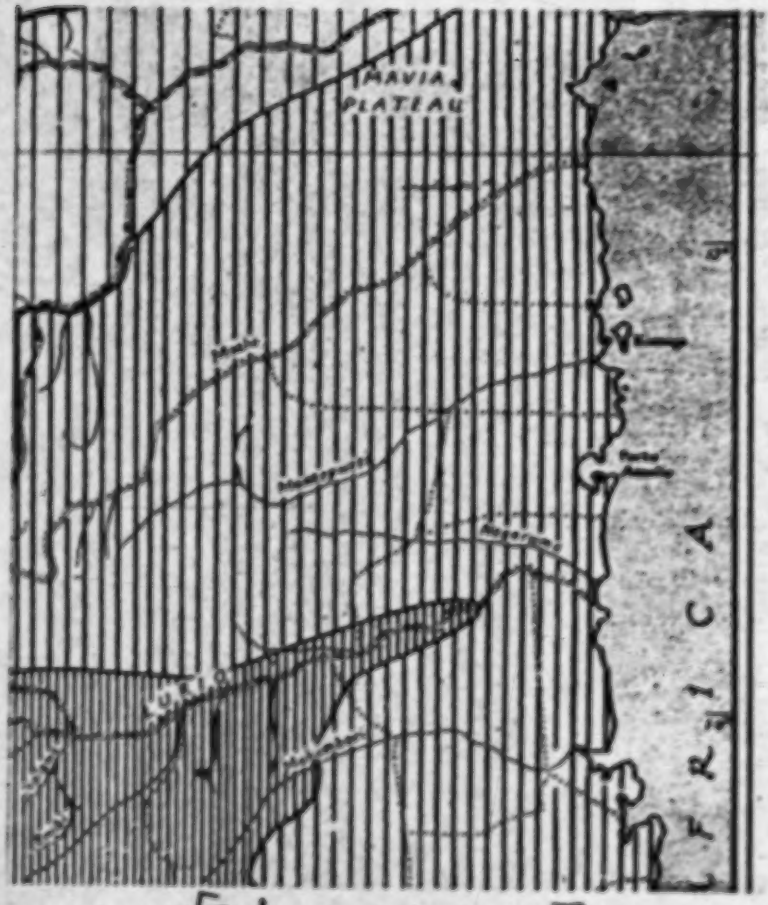

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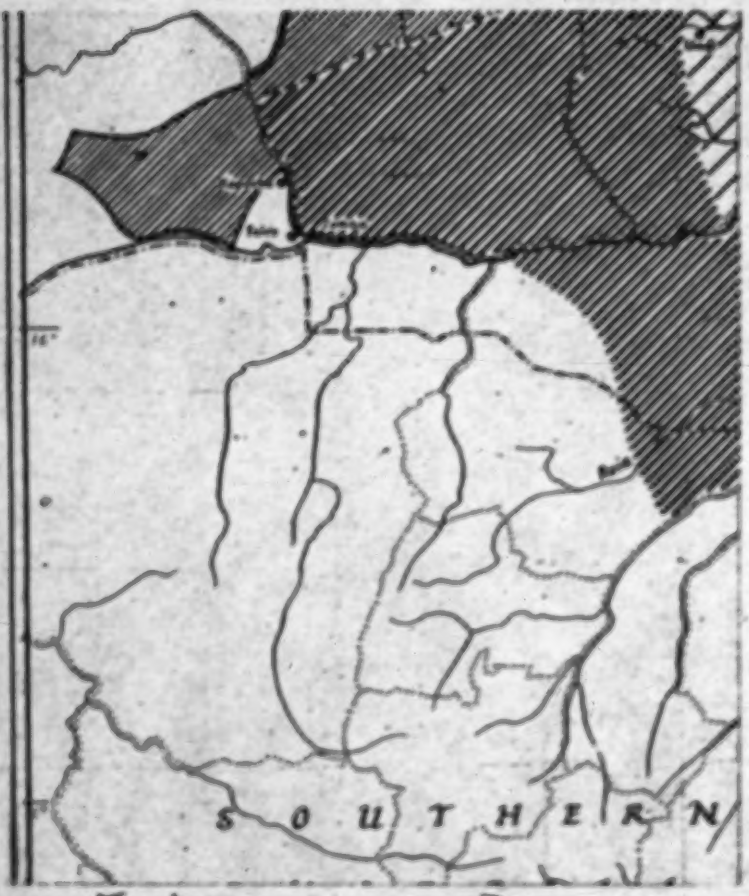

[End paper map I]

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[End paper map J]

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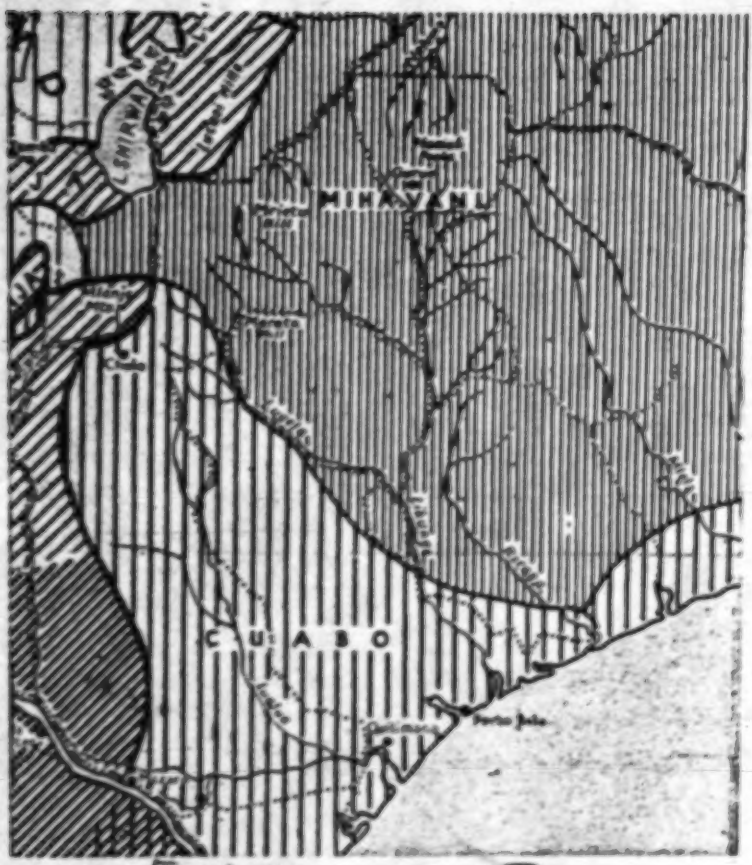

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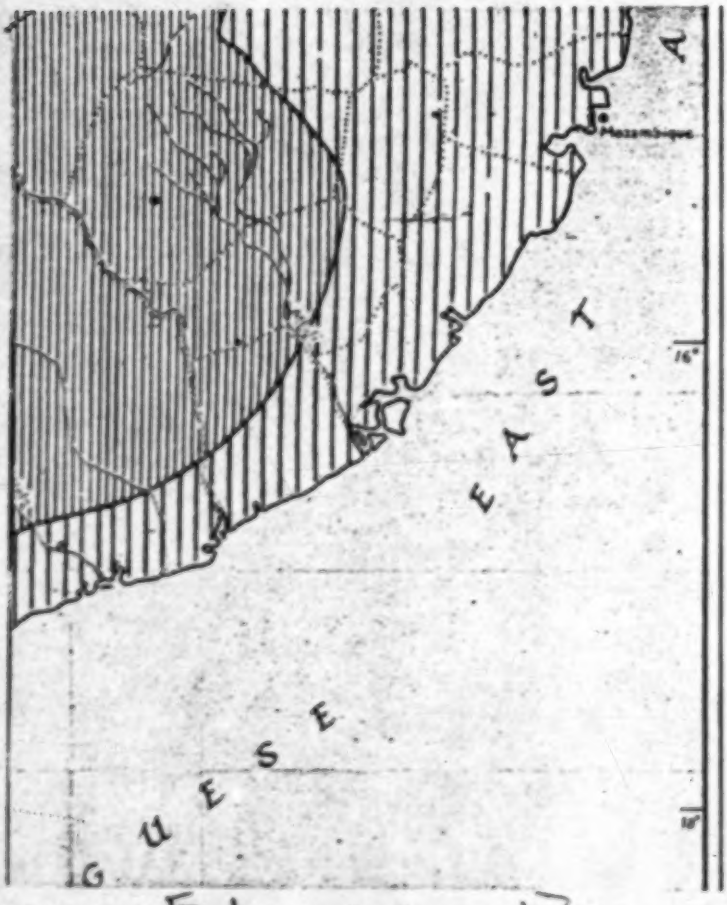

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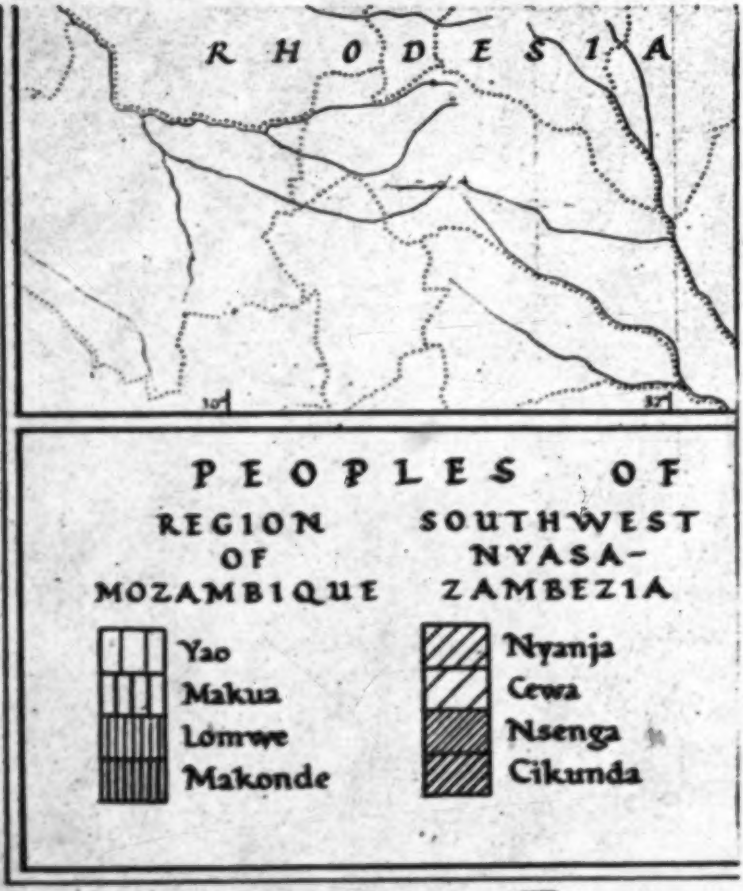

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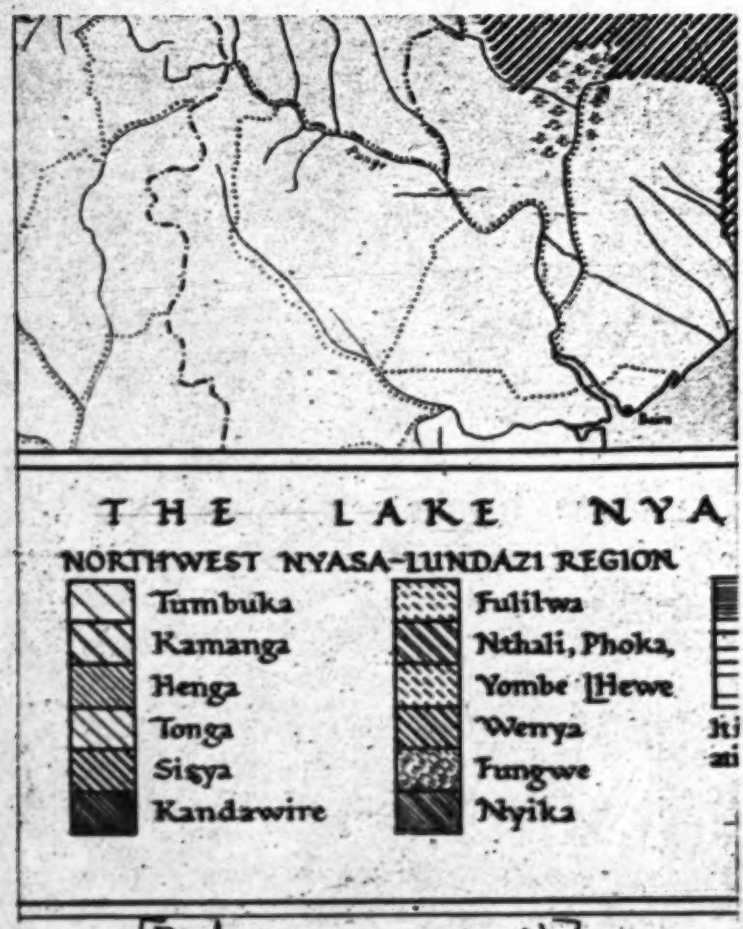

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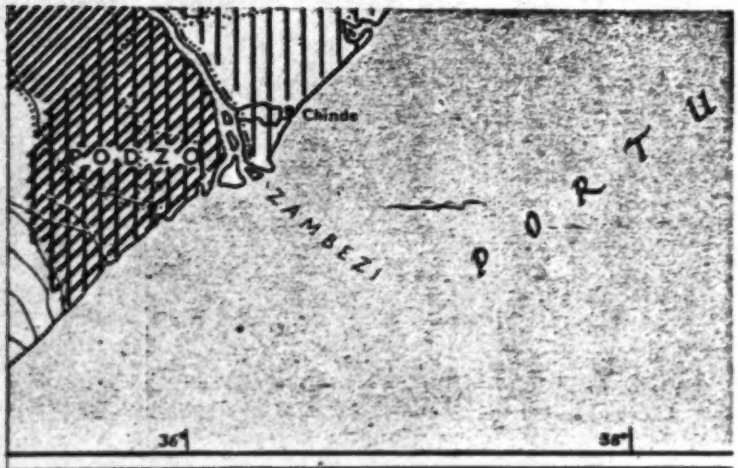

A S A R E G I O N

NORTH NYASA REGION

Ngonde
Nyakusa
Kinga

Iwa
Nyamwanga
other small groups

It is not possible to give more than a very rough approximation for the tribal distribution in this confusing area.

NGONI

Sc

[End paper map 0]

● 131

[End paper map P]

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

●131

[p.2]

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

1. *INTRODUCTION*

Land everywhere is the basis of social life, that upon which men move and rest; it is both in itself the most important raw material of economic activity and the location of all other materials such as minerals, wood and water; it is a universal condition of human action, an object of human understanding and feeling. And everywhere the use of land is defined and limited by a system of tenure, a series of laws, moral rules and conventions without which no orderly life at all would be possible upon it. This paper is an attempt to describe in part one such system of land tenure, that which I found to obtain among the Nyakyusa, a Bantu people of South Tanganyika, during the years 1934-1938. |2|

I have here described in detail the land-rights of individuals only, both in relation to one another and to the villages and chiefdoms of which they are members, and have left the rights of these groups in relation to one another for a further publication.

The Nyakyusa system of land-tenure is determined by three main factors: firstly by the physical conditions of life in this part of Central Africa, that is by the nature of the soil and its topography, by the climate and by the density of the human population; secondly by the particular practical uses to which land is put and the techniques employed therein; and thirdly by the form of Nyakyusa society, the groups and relationships into which it is articulated. But in considering these three main determinants we shall have to take into account intellectual and emotional factors also, the understanding of their land which the Nyakyusa possess and their feelings about it.

2. *PHYSICAL CONDITIONS*

The Rungwe District of the Southern Highlands Province of Tanganyika, in which the Nyakyusa live, is situated some 9° south of the Equator and is a part of the Great Rift Valley formation. The country of the Nyakyusa is bounded on the south by Lake Nyasa and the Songwe river, on the east by the almost sheer wall of the Livingstone Mountains (which rise to 10,000 feet), and on the west by the lower Ndali hills which, although included in the same administrative district, are inhabited not by Nyakyusa but by two cultural groups closely related to them, the Ndali and the Lambya. |3| |33|

The Nyakyusa live then between the two walls of the Rift, but their country is not itself all of an equal altitude. In the north the Rift is here interrupted and closed by the extinct Rungwe volcano (10,000 feet) from whose base (5,000 feet) the land drops for twenty-five miles in a cascade of hills and little plateaux to level out in a lake-shore plain fifteen or

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

twenty miles from Lake Nyasa (1,500 feet). A little compact country, secluded until very recently from any effective external contacts, slightly over 1,000 square miles in extent.[1]

The soil, particularly that of the higher ground in the north of the Nyakyusa country, is not in itself very rich, but, as between 100 and 130 inches of rain usually fall each year, the district is one of the most fertile in the whole of Tanganyika; two crops a year are often grown on the same patch of ground, and the African population is over eighty to the square mile. There is no infected tsetse fly and cattle are the most prized possession of the Nyakyusa.

For historical reasons, which we will discuss in a later section, the Nyakyusa have never been united under any one paramount chief of their own, but live in a number (nearly 100 at the present day) of tiny but traditionally independent chiefdoms. For these chiefdoms the numerous streams which run down from the north into Lake Nyasa and the crests of the ridges of land between them, form natural boundaries.

The country, of course, is not all of equal economic value, parts of it are stony and mountainous, other parts, and particularly the plain in the south, consist of deep and level soil; and the population is heavier on the plain than on the higher ground. Further, on the higher ground, there exist numerous old volcanic craters filled with rich moist soil and these, being more fertile than the surrounding land, are particularly valued by the Nyakyusa. Again, of the two chief economic crops of this district, one, coffee, can only be grown on the higher ground while the other, rice, can only be grown on or near the plain. And at every point their system of land tenure is partially determined by such physical factors as these.

3. *THE USES AND VALUE OF LAND*

The Nyakyusa use their land for building on, for agriculture, for pasture, for hunting and fishing; they collect firewood, reeds, thatching-grass, mushrooms and other wild vegetables there; they draw water from its streams and bathe daily in them; on their land they grow bamboos, bananas, *imiyunguti* trees[2] and coffee; they keep bees; they dance, they fight, they walk and lie down upon it; their land is both the receptacle of refuse and the location of religious ritual, while their doctors continually wander over its surface in search of magical medicines.

Not all these uses of land give rise to laws, moral rules or conventions, but only those uses which tend to lead men into conflict with one another or into mutual embarrassment. The only reasons for the existence of

[1] The whole of Rungwe District is 1,866 square miles, but this includes the hills of the Ndali and Lambya as well.

[2] I have not been able to discover the botanical name of this tree.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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[p. 2]

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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[p 2]

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6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

THE CONSTITUTION OF NGONDE.

1. *A COMPARATIVE PROBLEM.*

Ngonde is a district at the north end of Lake Nyasa; its centre is fixed, its boundaries vague. The centre of Ngonde is the sacred hill Mbande which stands in a bend of the Lukulu River eight miles from the lake. Here is the traditional home of the Kyungus, the paramount chiefs of Ngonde.[1] But its boundaries cannot be so easily defined. A man moving from any direction and almost any distance towards Mbande will say he is going "to Ngonde." One man may start five miles from Mbande and proceed to its base, another may, in the north at least, start far away among the Nyakyusa in Tanganyika and stop fifteen miles short of the Songwe, where alone the Kyungu's supremacy begins to be effective, and yet both alike say they are going "to Ngonde." But in this paper the name Ngonde is used to refer to the area of the Kyungu's present political paramountcy alone, an area defined in the north by the Songwe River, which is also the boundary between Nyasaland and Tanganyika, in the east by Lake Nyasa, in the west by the Nyasaland—Northern Rhodesia boundary and in the south by the borders of Chief Mwafulira's country some twenty-five miles from Mbande; an area of 2,687 square miles.

The population of Ngonde, thus defined, is 40,000, with a density of just under fifteen to the square mile; while the rainfall averages 45" per annum. It is thus very different from the country of the Nyakyusa across the Songwe, where the average rainfall is more than twice and the density of population about six times as great.

The people of Ngonde are not homogeneous in language and culture. The dominant group lives on the strip of plain which stretches along the shores of the Lake, north and south from Mbande, and the district is here referred to as "the plain," "the Ngonde plain" or "Ngonde proper." Behind them, in the hills which rise westwards to the borders of Northern Rhodesia, live small groups of Lambya, Sukwa, Wenya, Henga and Mambwe. They, while politically subordinate to the Kyungu, differ considerably from the inhabitants of Ngonde proper in their ways of life and speech. These upland groups we did not visit and, unless the contrary is specifically stated, all references here to the culture or customs of Ngonde should be taken to refer to the plain alone.

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[1] I use the forms Kyungu, Ngonde, Mbande now used by the young men and officially accepted. The old men speak of Chungu, Nkhonde, Mpande.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

128 as they do, in their behaviour and their mutual relationships to a common type. Space forbids such an undertaking here; and it is necessary to emphasize that, although the most significant facts are described in an orderly manner, and although certain reasons for these facts are indicated in their specific character and in their connections with one another, yet these reasons are not fully or systematically worked out, and the result is a description which leaves the facts only half-explained. And, in so far as this society is not here fully analyzed, so it is not yet fully comparable with others. The reader of this paper will detect many points of similarity and of difference between Nyakyusa society and some other with which he is familiar, but the comparison cannot be made to yield any propositions about the nature of human societies in general until the facts of both have been fully explained in terms of their particular social, cultural, and external conditions.

Climate, Cultural Groups, and European Contact.

101 The Nyakyusa live in the Rungwe District of South Tanganyika in
● 131 the Rift Valley at the head of Lake Nyasa. The valley is dominated and
133 closed at its North end by the recently extinct Rungwe volcano, from whose foot the land, starting as an upland plateau 5,000 ft. above sea-level, tumbles southwards for twenty-five miles in a broken cascade of hills, to level out in a plain fifteen or twenty miles from Lake Nyasa. The Lake is 1200 ft. above the sea. The East wall of the Rift rises to 10,000 ft. or more in the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains, but the West wall is two [32] or three thousand feet lower. The climate is very wet, for about 130" of rain fall each year, and, at 9° South of the Equator, is also very hot. [16 The rain and the sun together make the land extremely fertile; the 73] district is thickly populated (over 100 to the square mile), famine is rare and the Nyakyusa are far better fed than most of their neighbours. Rice 177 was introduced into the plain by Arabs, coffee by the German Missiona- 241 ries in the hills, and these two crops to-day, under the enthusiastic care and guidance of the Government Agricultural Department, bring to many Nyakyusa a small but steadily increasing cash income.

262 Their main foods are bananas, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and a
241 variety of greenstuffs, together with meat and curds from their cattle. Millet is extensively grown and is used both for making beer and for eating in the form of porridge.

101 The name *Nyakyusa* is nowadays used by themselves as a general name for all those who have similar speech and customs and who live in Tanganyika; but formerly it only covered those who live in the South of the district, in the plain and up in the hills as far North as the administra-

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

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Map 1. Country north of Lake Nyasa

[p. viii]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyasi*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Njondo*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 2, p. 10 (1939). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassaneger* (1906). *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Afrika* (1906).

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and try to understand the nature and reasons for change. Here, then, is a good opportunity for the study of social change – not only in land tenure as such, but also in village and family organisation, political authority and economic life.

II

The Nyakyusa are a Bantu people inhabiting the main part of the Rungwe District in southern Tanganyika, immediately to the north of Lake Nyasa. In 1948 they numbered about 199,000 in that District, but about 10,000 men were probably at the time temporarily absent from their homes and in employment in the mines and towns of the Rhodesias and South Africa (see Gulliver, 1957), whilst about 20,000 had migrated to live in the adjacent Mbeya District to the north.

The tribal area comprises a confined geographical basin surrounding the northern end of Lake Nyasa. It extends only about 40 miles from the tip of the lake at 1,550 feet above sea level to the Poroto Mountains in the north at 8,000 feet; and from east to west is only about 30 miles, from the almost sheer walls of the Livingstone Mountains (with peaks up to 10,000 feet) to the Ndali Highlands (rising to about 7,000 feet). There are therefore unusually large ecological differences within so small an area. Three major regions are to be distinguished: the "Northern Highlands" over about 4,500 feet, the low-lying "Lake Plains" in the south, and the "Central Region" in between. Everywhere rainfall is reliable and high, averaging at least 100 inches annually[1], and this amply compensates for a certain poverty and misuse of the soil, although (and particularly in the Central Region) it brings dangers of soil erosion. Except in the highest parts the banana is the staple food, supported by maize, beans, finger millet and groundnuts. In the Northern Highlands coffee has become well established as the principal cash crop; in the Lake Plains paddy rice cultivation provides both a food and a cash crop; in the Central Region the country is too low generally for coffee and too high and dry for rice; consequently cash-cropping is considerably inferior and the people's standard of living is rather poorer.

The Nyakyusa and their country tended for a long time to be relatively isolated from the outside world by high mountain walls and rain-soaked roads. In addition, or because of it perhaps, they developed an almost unique culture which was supported by considerable conservatism and high insularity. They still continue to regard their African neighbours beyond the mountains as their social and cultural inferiors. The turmoil of the slave-trade in Central Africa passed them by; in modern times they have not enthusiastically accepted Christianity and they have refused to take up the use of Swahili, the *Territorial lingua franca*. In recent years, and most especially since the end of World War II, they have, however, accepted and pushed forward with vigour a rapid and extensive economic development, involving particularly the production of coffee and paddy as cash crops, and large-scale labour migration to the south in the high-wage mining industries. The multiplicity of petty, often tiny, independent chiefdoms has been reorganised to provide four local government areas, each under a Rural Council, in which the old chiefdoms have become something like parishes[2]. Although much of the old conservatism and narrow parochialism persists, yet there is now an atmosphere of accepted change, of a keen desire for economic development, and a general acceptance of a cash economy.

Probably the most significant feature of modern life in the Nyakyusa country is the increasing scarcity of land for agriculture in relation to the

1. As Talbot, in the Northern Highlands, annual rainfall averaged 99.28 inches between 1919 and 1932; at Kyela, in the Lake Plains, the average between 1940 and 1951 was 108.33 inches.
2. See Gulliver, P.H., The adjustment of a system of land government by African rural councils in the Rungwe District, Tanganyika. *The Journal of African Administration*, IX, 4, October, 1957.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

In the Northern Highlands there is now a strong tendency for the tight village system to disintegrate as men seek to site their houses, each in his own coffee plot. In the Lake Plains also the structure of the age-village is changing – there the villages persist as such but they come to be inhabited by men of any age and new villages do not emerge with a new chief. No attempt is made here, however, to analyse these variations for they are only now beginning and no satisfactory, detailed information is available for the post-war cash economy of the highland areas.

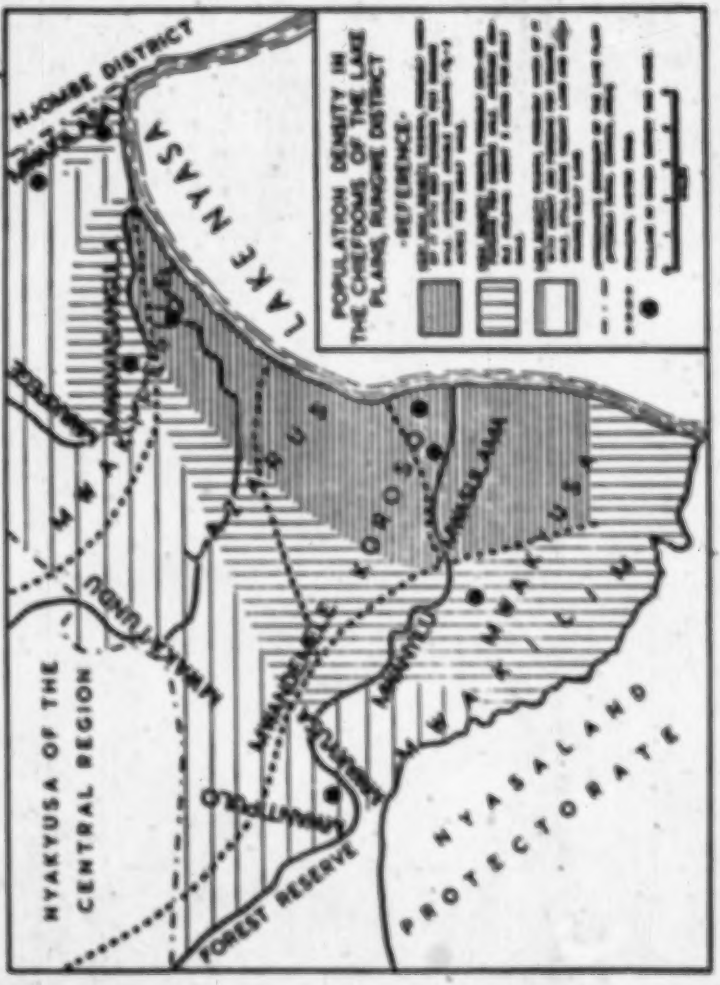
The Government of Tanganyika has permitted the publication of this essay, and I wish to express my gratitude for its support. The essay is a modified version of my original Report which was presented to Government in January, 1956. The views expressed in it are my own and not those of Government. As usual in my work as Government Sociologist, I have received much valuable assistance, advice and information from officers stationed in the area. The Nyakyusa themselves, as during my first enquiry, were usually cooperative, and at least some of them welcomed my work as a contribution to the easement of their novel difficulties. It would not have been surprising had they remained obdurate and antagonistic towards my enquiries about their land, for like many modern Africans they have a sense of insecurity which is not susceptible to reason. In fact I was able without much difficulty to make any enquiry I wished, to measure sample areas and to discuss the situation in all its aspects. Perhaps it is that an African people welcome a sympathetic enquirer and in their problems genuinely want assistance. The task of a sociologist is of course in some ways rather easier than that of an administrator or technical officer who has to persuade the people actually to accept and practice new ways and to abandon old ways. It is hoped that this essay may be of assistance both to these officers and to the people whom they are attempting to assist and teach.

Finally, I must thank the East African Institute of Social Research which has accepted this essay for publication, and especially Dr. L. A. Fallers who kindly read and criticised the original draft and who drew the two sketch maps.

Note: The term, the "Lake Plains", as used in this essay is to be understood to cover the major part of the modern local government area under the Ntebela Rural Council. Omitted are the small groups of Kisi (Ikombe) and Ndali (Ngana) peoples to the extreme east and west respectively. This area contains the alluvial flood plains surrounding the northern tip of Lake Nyasa, and the lowest foothills to the north where the country begins its steep incline towards the Poroto Mountains. To the south lies the lake and to the south-west, beyond the meandering Songwe river, lie the bushlands of the northern part of the Nyasaland Protectorate. To the east are the towering Livingstone Mountains and to the north live the other Nyakyusa groups in the highlands.

The area comprises a fairly compact social and economic region with a common historical tradition. Several of the indigenous chiefdoms stretch across the intermediate boundary between flood plains and foothills. With but one exception the present chiefs are lineal descendants, in their various houses, of the original Mwakyusa who led the people into this lowland area five generations ago. The modern inhabitants are pre-eminently the Nyakyusa-proper.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



[Facing p. 15]

[P.236 A]

WANYAKYUSA

By P. H. [illegible]
Rukwa, Rungwe, 3rd February

131 The Wanyakyusa occupy the District of Rungwe in the Southern Highlands Province. The district lies between 9° and 9½° S. latitude
133 at the northern tip of Lake Nyasa. The altitude ranges from 1,500 feet to 9,500 feet. The
631 district is divided into twelve chiefdoms. The Administrative Headquarters are at Tukuyu, which was known before the British occupation as Neu Langenberg.

Inhabitants

101 The local people are not indigenous to this area. They came, tradition has it, from
[173] Mahenge via Ukinga after many tribal fights. They are akin to the Wahenga in Nyasaland
191 bordering on the Tanganyika boundary. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of the Wanyakyusa speak Kiswahili. According to the 1935
161 census the total population was 153,204. The
162 total number of tax-payers in 1942 was 35,304, or 23.04 per cent of the total population.

181 The people themselves are extremely industrious and intelligent. As there are 90
105 people to the square mile, living conditions are crowded and emigration is continually taking place. The people are partial to litigation over cattle and women. The number of cases heard annually in the Native Courts is about 6,000. There is no one historical and traditional head of the tribe. The twelve Chiefs are, in reality, hereditary Headmen who have been selected by Government to be Chiefs. They are in effect only *primi inter pares* in native eyes, the outlook of the people being unusually democratic for a native tribe.

105 The people live in houses made of wattle and daub or bamboo frame, with thatched
347 roof, and villages are sited mostly along ridges.
34 Rectangular houses are now built instead of the round huts of former days. They often stand in rows with a main street down the middle with bananas in the background. The more progressive natives build with *sun-dried* or burnt brick. Stock are stalled in the same house owing to the prevalence of thieving, but sleep in separate rooms.

Climate

132 The rainfall of the district varies in the different areas. In Tukuyu itself the annual average for 23 years (1918-1942) is 100.22 inches. On the Lake shore the average is probably higher, but no continuous statistics are available. The heaviest rainfall months are from December to May, but, in most years,

12i Blegaard E-S (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Chagga FN4
Haya FN8

House-types of the Banyakyusa

By Asgeir Blegaard

During a stay in the Southern Highlands in Tanganyika in 1955, I was given the opportunity to inspect—and draw plans of—some of the houses belonging to the local Bantu tribe of the Nyakyusa. In literature they are known also under the name of Konde.

The district in which they live is fairly high above sea level and near the borders of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; the rainfall is fully adequate. Bananas and coffee are doing well—the banana trees often forming groves in between which you catch a glimpse of the village houses.

The district invites comparison with other localities in Tanganyika where the country is high, and where precipitation is plentiful. Such localities would be the districts around Kilimanjaro and near Bukoba to the west of Lake Victoria. In the former live the Chagga tribe, in the latter the tribe of the Haya. Even here bananas and coffee are plenty—and the I.Q. of both tribes is said to be high, as is the case of the Banyakyusa (plural of Nyakyusa).

Maybe you might therefore expect to find a corresponding standard of dwelling-houses, perhaps even the same type of hut. But in this matter you will be highly surprised; so great are the differences between the three areas. Apart from the original design of the house being round and the roof thatched, no similarity exists between the various houses or their interior lay-outs.

The round, thatched Chagga hut has its roof all way down to the ground. It is not very large and the interior lay-out is quite primitive. A cow or goat lives all its life indoors and is fed there. A short and uncomfortable bed is found near by. Down the centre of the floor is a stone-paved aisle. Everything looks quite simple—especially when you remember that in other aspects the Chagga are quite advanced in their use of modern facilities; for instance they use electricity for the grinding of their maize.

The Haya hut—the old, round type—is a really magnificent thing. I think its centre is seven or eight metres high. In front it has a kind of overhang, maybe you might call it a front room, where people will sit, and where guests will be received. If you are a welcome guest, a straw mat will be rolled out to cover the grass flooring of the hut. The walls of the front room are solid plaster made from a kind of mud. The hearth is placed near the centre of the inner room.

[7-49]